

commentary

from other pens...

Former secretaries seek governorships

By Will Lester *Associated Press Writer*

WASHINGTON — At least three members of former President Clinton's Cabinet are considering a run for governor in their home states — an high number in comparison with recent presidential cabinets. Such a transition is not a natural progression political analysts say. Andrew Cuomo, Clinton's secretary of housing and urban development, is running for the Democratic nomination for governor in New York. Bill Richardson, who was energy secretary, is forming an exploratory committee in New Mexico and will decide next year whether to run for an open governor's seat.

Janet Reno, the former attorney general, has said she's considering a run for Florida governor against incumbent Republican Jeb Bush. The former Cabinet officials enjoy name identity with voters, but don't necessarily have any advantage in a run for statewide office.

"I think it's not a natural jumping-off point," said former Clinton Commerce Secretary William Daley, who works with a New York investment firm and managed Al Gore's presidential campaign. "Once you leave your state, it's harder to assimilate back in."

Richardson will be polishing political skills developed in his stint as a popular former congressman for a dozen years. Reno was elected state attorney five times in south Florida. Cuomo, son of the former New York governor, has spent a lifetime learning the political trade.

Cuomo already has entered the New York governor's race, facing state Comptroller H. Carl McCall. The winner would have to face George Pataki, the Republican incumbent, if he decides to run for a third term.

Richardson emphasizes he wants to weigh the odds of such a race before formally deciding what he will do in New Mexico.

"I'm considering running for governor because I still have the political juices," Richardson said. "I feel I have one big race left in me. But I want to test the waters for my support."

Democrats say Richardson was very popular as a congressman and that will be considered along with his service as energy secretary. Republicans agree, but predict the nation's energy problems will drag him down.

"He was well regarded in New Mexico as a congressman and would certainly be a formidable candidate," said Jay McLeskey, executive director of New Mexico Republicans.

Reno surprised many when she announced a week ago she's considering a run for governor. She said she's concerned about the conservative direction Florida government has taken under Jeb Bush, younger brother of the president. Analysts say her controversial stint as attorney general and limited political experience may make it tough for her.

Reno would be one of about 10 candidates for the Democratic nomination, including Pete Peterson, the outgoing ambassador to Vietnam and a former congressman from northern Florida. Democrats say they are starting to get the kind of high-profile field of candidates they will need to pick a strong challenger to Bush.

Republicans are wary of statewide elections after the virtual tie in the 2000 presidential race between George W. Bush and Al Gore.

The former transportation secretary, Rodney Slater, has been subject of political speculation he would run for governor of Arkansas someday. But Slater says he plans to focus on practicing law for now.

Some former members of the Clinton Cabinet simply don't have the political bug they once had, including Richard Riley, the former education secretary and a two-term governor of South Carolina. Now a lawyer and college professor, Riley says running a Cabinet agency can be fine training for a governor, once elected.

"Cabinet members work a lot with governors, mayors and state legislative leaders," Riley said. "It's pretty good experience for understanding what a governor does."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Will Lester covers polling and politics for The Associated Press.



May is time for reflection, renewal

I don't know about you, but May is an emotionally-mixed month for me.

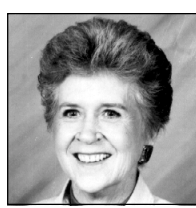
I love the coming of spring, blooming flowers and warm weather. But two of the greatest tragedies of my life happened in May. My mother's death and my husband's death.

It was thirty-five years ago this May that I lost my husband. He died in a plane crash in the North Sea off the coast of England. The body was never found, and very little of the plane was recovered.

It seemed so unbelievable. He just went to work and never came home. How do you explain that to two little boys when you can't believe it yourself? I'm not sure they have ever fully accepted such a great loss.

Many things still remind me of my husband: an Air Force uniform, the quiet humor of my first son, the way my second son runs, their hands that are shaped like their father's. My third son was born three months after his father's death. He is eerily like the father he never knew—patient, accepting, family-centered.

May is a month of reflection for me. My outlet is this column.



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All the joy I remember of my loved ones, all the love I still feel for them, overcomes me in May. The world is coming back to life after a dormancy; why can't they?

Each year I miss them; each year I thank God they were part of my life. I know I will see them again. They are waiting patiently with my father, and with my Father. But there are times when I think I can't wait. I want to see them again.

Life is lonely, even amid all the joy and loyalty of family and friends. At those rare moments I remind myself that love comes in many forms and from many directions.

These are some of the things love is:

- 1) "Love is what you've been through with somebody." James Thurber. 2) "Love is being stupid together." Paul Valery. 3) "Love is what makes

life worthwhile." Lorna G.T. 4) Love is, all the things in First Corinthians 13.

The supreme example of love comes from God, who loved each of us enough to die for us. Trusting God's wisdom and over-all plan for our lives helps us understand the ultimate plan, which includes heavenly reunions.

As I reflect on my May losses, I also realize all I have gained — even through those losses. Without God's love, life would be too overwhelming and sad. I need to be more aware of that.

Maybe this prayer by Amanda Bradley will help me — and you:

"Dear Father, please make me more fully aware of everything you do for me, aware of the masterful touch of Your hand in all of the beauty I see, aware of the kindness and care that You show, the ways that You help see me through — and Father, please make me aware of Your will, of all that You want me to do."

My life continues, and the lives of my loved ones continue with and through me. Spring is no time to be sad. God is re-awakening the world — and my spirit.

Is Bob Kerrey home free?

CBS's "60 Minutes" devoted an hour to the charge that former Sen. Bob Kerrey, leading a team of Navy Seals, executed unarmed civilians, including a baby, in the Vietnamese village of Thanh Phong. The morning after the show aired, the Lincoln Journal Star (Neb.) interviewed Kerrey.

During the CBS program, Kerrey denied that there had been any intent to kill civilians in that 1969 night action in a free-fire zone, maintaining that the Seals had returned fire after being fired upon.

Relaxed, Kerrey told the Nebraskan interviewer that, as the reporter put it, "The end of the public's fixation on that night in Thanh Phong could be over." Added Kerrey, "Enough is enough."

Indeed, even before the accusations and denials on the "60 Minutes" show were broadcast, the board of trustees of New York's New School University, of which Kerrey is president, declared "unqualified support" for him.

And in the weeks since the thunderstorm of media coverage of this story, Kerrey is off the front pages and seldom mentioned on television news, including the 24-hour news stations. Nor is there much discussion of Kerrey on radio talk shows.

Still, for some Americans, including a few journalists, questions remain. Why and how, for example, did five of Kerrey's Raiders, after years of silence, suddenly decide to confirm Kerrey's version of the incident?

The seventh Seal, Gerhard Klann, told "60 Minutes" and The New York Times that Kerrey had commanded him and the other five Seals to line up women and children and to shoot them to death.

On April 30, The New York Post reported that Kerrey had brought those five members of his squad to New York City "from all over the United States" three days before. A high-powered public-relations operative got rooms for them at an Upper East Side hotel. They then traveled to Kerrey's home, where "the group met until 2 a.m., thrash-



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ing out a consensus of what they say happened" that night in 1969. "By late Saturday afternoon, Kerrey was emboldened to claim that sections of the media were involved in a conspiracy against him."

Gerhard Klann, who works in a steel mill, can't afford to hire a PR firm.

The May 7 issue of Time magazine reported that on April 7, five members of Kerrey's Raiders "dined at Kerrey's house and talked the raid over for the very first time." The next evening, they issued "a statement of facts."

This reminded me of a New York City policy. When one or more New York City police officers are accused of a particularly brutal action, they are given 48 hours during which they need not speak to anyone, including the police department's internal-affairs investigators. There are some, including me, who believe that this 48-hour rule allows the accused to agree on an account of what happened.

Another murky part of this story concerns the misapprehension by many that Kerrey finally broke his 32-year silence this year to The New York Times and "60 Minutes" because he needed to heal himself, to exorcise the nightmare that had caused him such anguish for so long.

However, as Howard Kurtz has reported in the Washington Post, Kerrey recounted his memory of that night to Newsweek magazine two years ago — at a time when he had decided not to run for the presidency.

Newsweek's assistant managing editor, Evan

Thomas, told Kurtz: "We could have run the story. We had Kerrey's confirmation. We just didn't want to do it to the guy when he wasn't running for president."

And Newsweek's editor, Mark Whitaker, adds, "We all agreed there's a higher level of scrutiny that goes on for presidential candidates."

It's the first time I've heard this criterion for not running a story about what might have been a war crime. Was it really not right to run the story because the officer in charge that night was no longer a presidential candidate?

Tom Rosenstiel of the Project for Excellence in Journalism said to the Washington Post: "It's hard to imagine by what definition this isn't news. Even if Kerrey never intended to run for president, the story of one of the more admired figures in political life, who won a Bronze star for this action, speaks to something beyond just Kerrey. It raises all kinds of questions about what the Vietnam War was like for grunts and young officers."

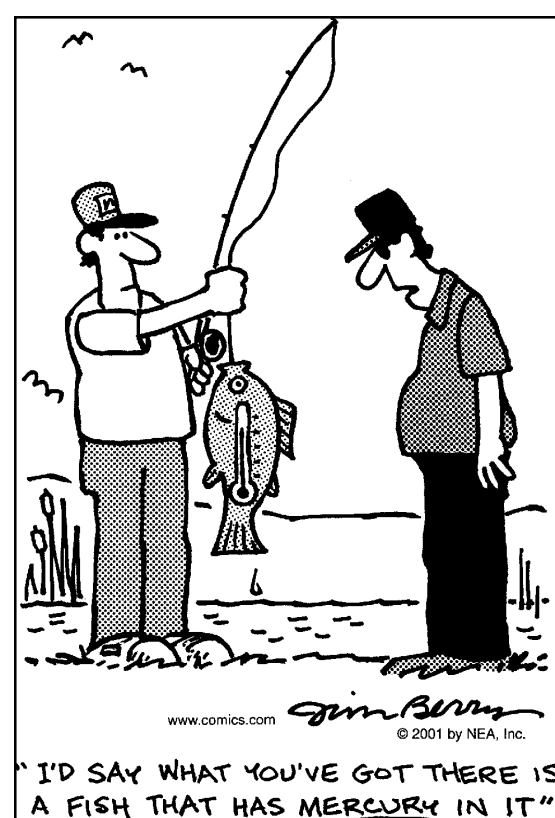
And what it was like for the women and children killed by Kerrey's Raiders.

But there's more to Newsweek's holding the story. According to the May 7 issue of Newsweek, the magazine says it "did reach an informal understanding with Kerrey that when and if he decided to go public, he would turn to Newsweek." That was two years ago.

So that Newsweek could have a scoop, the public's right to know — a right that is hallowed among journalists — was deep-sixed.

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